



A farmer in Uganda buys a bus ticket to the city with her last cotton crop: she can't compete with U.S. prices, though her costs are less than U.S. farmers'. In a small town in Guatemala, a father leaves his family to search for jobs in the north, unable to sell corn in a market flooded with cheap imports. A rural community in the United States is left desolate when small-scale farmers sell their land and move away.

Globalization invites a worldwide exchange of ideas, cultures, goods and services—something to celebrate. However, the terms that govern these exchanges are defined by a few wealthy nations, global corporations and financial investors—something to question. When it comes to the costs and benefits of globalization, it depends who you ask. For many of our neighbors to the south in Mexico, exchanges with the United States have become increasingly costly.

“Ten years ago, I could go to the plaza and sell my corn at my price,” says Jorge Vasquez Martinez, a farmer who left his farm in Oaxaca. “Now you have to sell to the bodegas there, and they set a price that’s not enough to live on. I never thought I would end up in the United States, but things changed so quickly.” Vasquez now picks tomatoes in Florida (Miami Herald, 2003). “There’s the same winners and losers on both sides of the border,” says Rhonda Perry, a small farmer in Missouri, “Farmers and rural communities losing out while corporate agribusiness cashes in” (In Motion Magazine, 2003).

In order to undercut global competition, the United States pays its farmers subsidies based on output. This system favors agribusinesses that grow commodities in quantity and sell them abroad; and it benefits corporations that buy raw ingredients and turn them into processed food. In addition, the United States urges trade agreements like the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) on developing countries, promising economic growth in exchange for markets open to U.S. products. However, since NAFTA, 1.7 million Mexican farmers have left their land, according to Oxfam. Similar agreements, along with burdensome debts and corrupt governments, have led to worsening inequality across Latin America and Africa.

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Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) U.S. is an agency of the Mennonite and Brethren in Christ churches which endeavors to foster hope and reconciliation in a broken world by working alongside persons suffering from poverty, violence and oppression, and by promoting peace and justice through education, advocacy and relationship building. For additional resources, contact MCC at the addresses on the back page. Compiled by Rebeca Jimenez Yoder, Tina Hartman and Bethany Spicher, January 2005

When migrants like Jorge attempt to enter the United States, they find a culture of unwelcome. On the U.S./Mexico border, agents, fences, stadium lights and motion sensors have multiplied since the early 1990s, and more than 3,000 people have died attempting to cross, according to the No More Deaths Campaign. In the past decade, reduced public services, increased workplace raids and backlogs in visa processing have beleaguered even documented newcomers. Especially since Sept. 11, 2001 and the Department of Homeland Security’s takeover of immigration services and enforcement, immigrants are often treated as threats to national security.

Tragically, many in the United States listen only to the voices of the politicians, corporations and investors who benefit from globalization, dismissing the voices of immigrants, which tell another story. Immigrants remind us that our ancestors were likely foreigners themselves. That the U.S. economy depends on the labor and skills of immigrants. That U.S. culture is indebted to languages and customs from around the world. And that U.S. policies are, in fact, among the forces that motivate migrants like Jorge to leave home in the first place. ■

## FACTS AND FIGURES

**Only five countries control 96 percent of world corn exports. The United States alone controls 70 percent of corn exports.**

—National Family Farm Coalition

**Mexican farmers received a 13.2 percent subsidy from 1995 to 2000. Meanwhile, U.S. corn growers receive 40 percent of their income from government subsidies, and account for 25 percent of corn consumed in Mexico.**

—Oxfam

**Eighty-five percent of the fruits and vegetables that add up to the nation’s \$28 billion produce industry is harvested by two million immigrant farm workers.**

—Institute for Food and Development Policy.

**The average immigrant annually contributes \$1,800 more in taxes than he or she receives in services.**

—National Academy of Sciences.

**Immigrant workers sent \$72.3 billion to friends and family in developing countries in 2001, exceeding the dollars of development assistance given by governments to low-income nations.**

—World Bank

**Latin American immigrants sent \$30 billion to their home countries in 2004, and contribute an estimated \$450 billion to the U.S. economy each year.**

—Inter American Development Bank

# Faith that reflects

Migrants, as well as the towns they leave behind, lose the stability and solidarity that community offers. Vulnerable to low wages and exploitative conditions, migrants pick vegetables, sew shirts, clean houses and assemble machines. They are often invisible to those who profit from their labor: corporations unaccountable to particular communities, but rather to anonymous shareholders and to consumers clamoring for lower prices.

The Bible has much to say about building communities of dignity, equality and accountability. The Jubilee economy laid out in Leviticus 25 established structures to care for the marginalized, and included provisions even for sojourners (Deuteronomy 24:14–22). The prophesy in Isaiah 62 indicates that God’s will is for communities to eat the food they harvest, to benefit from their own labor and skills. The prophet Micah promises a vine and fig tree for everyone (Micah 4:4).

In the Gospels, Jesus proclaims a new order, in which the community’s poorest and weakest members inherit the kingdom (Matthew 5:3–10). In Acts, the early church lived that order, understanding itself as a model of the kingdom, a city on a hill. Wealthy and poor members alike pooled their resources and shared equally (Acts 2:44, 45).

How can the church today be a city on the hill in the context of globalization and immigration? Welcoming strangers, as Jesus instructed (Matthew 25:35), is a good first step—offering hospitality to migrants displaced by an unjust global economy and unprotected by U.S. immi-

gration law. But in the long run, immigrants need the church to work toward a world in which they can stay home if they choose, to labor and rest—unafraid—under their own fig trees.

*See page 3 for alternative policies.*

## Names Matter

What should we call those who enter the country without authorization? Are they illegal aliens? Are they undocumented immigrants?

*“The alien who resides with you shall be to you as the citizen among you; you shall love the alien as yourself” (Leviticus 19:34).*

In the Leviticus passage, the word *alien* is from the Hebrew *ger*, which is also translated *stranger* or *sojourner* and used in Scripture to describe the Israelites in Egypt, as strangers in a strange land. However, *alien* in our society today commonly refers to beings from outer space. Calling people *aliens* dehumanizes and distances “them” from “us.” In that sense, *immigrant* captures a truer sense of the Hebrew word’s original meaning.

What about illegal versus undocumented? The U.S. immigration system is broken. Increased border patrols, more workplace raids and reduced access to public services have not stemmed the flow of migrants. Nor have these approaches ended worker exploitation, human trafficking and deaths on the border. Meanwhile, U.S. companies continue to offer immigrants jobs, and U.S. policies continue to destabilize immigrants’ home countries. In many cases, laws are breaking people rather than vice versa. Naming immigrants *undocumented* recognizes that reality. ■

## BREAKING THE LAW?

The Bible challenges us to accept (1 Peter 2:13), pray for (1 Timothy 2:1) and be subject to (Romans 13:1) governing authorities. But there are also many Bible stories where God’s people disobeyed authority in order to obey God. The midwives Shiphrah and Puah refused to kill babies (Exodus 1:15–22). The youths Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego would not bow down to the king’s statue (Daniel 3). Daniel and Esther, as well as the apostles who declared, “We must obey God rather than any human authority” (Acts 5:29) are other examples. It seems, then, that the Biblical norm is to obey the law. However, when governing authorities overstep their role and make laws that call us

to harm others, block us from efforts to protect life or prevent us from worshiping God, then obedience requires us to disobey the law.

Some Anabaptists have chosen not to obey U.S. laws that are inconsistent with Jesus’ teachings. Even before the law made provisions for conscientious objectors, many refused to serve in the military. Others have chosen not to pay military taxes. In the 1980s, some Anabaptist congregations broke the law to become sanctuary churches for refugees fleeing violence in Central America. Today, should Anabaptists house or hire undocumented immigrants, even though it is not legal to do so?

# Faith that acts

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## Action Suggestions

- *Build relationships with newcomers.* Facilitate the sharing of immigrants' stories and gifts in your church and neighborhood. Learn about their home countries, and consider establishing relationships with churches in those regions.
- *Learn about issues affecting immigrants* by reading newspapers or magazines, joining national immigrant advocacy organizations or contacting church agencies that work with immigration issues.
- *Offer your church facilities and volunteers* for English classes, ethnic celebrations or outreach programs needed by immigrants in your community.
- *Organize a study group* or community forum on issues of globalization and immigration.
- *Buy fair trade.* Pay farmers and craftspeople a living wage. Visit Co-op America ([www.coopamerica.org](http://www.coopamerica.org)), Alternatives for Simple Living ([www.simpleliving.org](http://www.simpleliving.org)) or Ten Thousand Villages ([www.tenthousandvillages.org](http://www.tenthousandvillages.org)).
- *Dig deeper.* Explore root causes behind migration by organizing study tours to immigrants' home countries, to the U.S./Mexico border or to U.S. prisons where migrants are detained.
- *Take risks.* Prayerfully consider whether God may be calling your congregation to offer shelter, assistance or employment to undocumented immigrants.
- *Advocate for just and humane trade and immigration policies* by contacting local, state and national elected officials. Choose one or two issues below to highlight in a letter to your legislators.

## Alternative Policies

- *Allow developing countries to nurture their own economies:* to manage their trade relationships, foster domestic jobs and protect their farmers' livelihoods.
- *Cancel the debts of developing countries* so they can devote resources to development initiatives.
- *Make trade agreements and institutions more accountable.* Provide for public access to and citizen participation in trade negotiations.
- *Provide access to legal status for current residents without documents* and increase opportunities for legal immigration.

- *Guarantee immigrant workers fair wages* and safe working conditions, as well as the rights to organize, change employers and travel legally to and from their homelands.
- *Allow documented immigrants access to public benefits* like non-emergency health care immediately upon receipt of permanent residency, not after years of waiting.
- *Stop the escalation of agents and weapons along the U.S./Mexico border* and design a more humane and relevant response to economic migration.

Many action suggestions and alternative policies are adapted from the MCC U.S. Guide to Immigration, the MCC Washington Office Guides to Food and Farming and Economic Globalization and the Mennonite Church USA Church-wide Statement on Immigration, 2003.

## Definitions

**North American Free Trade Agreement:** Implemented in 1994, NAFTA eliminated trade barriers for goods and services and established intellectual property and investor rights between Mexico, Canada and the United States. A similar treaty, the Central America Free Trade Agreement, will include El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, Guatemala, Costa Rica and the United States if these governments approve it.

**Free Trade Area of the Americas:** Using NAFTA as a model, the FTAA will include 34 countries in the Americas and the Caribbean. If implemented, it will be the largest trade agreement in history.

**World Bank and International Monetary Fund:** Established in 1944, these institutions' stated goals include promoting economic growth, resolving financial crises and alleviating poverty. In reality, policies imposed by the World Bank and IMF have increased inequality in many developing countries. Voting power is determined by economic size of the member nations.

**World Trade Organization:** Created in 1995 as an extension of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, the WTO is a membership organization that works to decrease trade barriers among member nations. In theory, every member gets an equal vote. ■

## 1 CORINTHIANS 12:13, 24-27

"For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and we were all made to drink of one Spirit . . . But, God has so arranged the body . . . that . . . the members may have the same care for one another. If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honored, all rejoice together with it. Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it."

# Resources on Immigration and Trade

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## **Mennonite Central Committee U.S. Immigration Office**

21 South 12th Street, PO Box 500, Akron, PA 17501

*Phone:* (717) 859-1152 ext. 366

*E-mail:* rjy@mcc.org

*Web:* [www.mcc.org/us/peaceandjustice/immigrat.html](http://www.mcc.org/us/peaceandjustice/immigrat.html)

Offers resources for welcoming newcomers or beginning church-based immigration programs, as well as referrals for constituents seeking adjustment of status. For MCC videos and materials on globalization and immigration, visit the online Resource Catalog. Videos include “Coffee, Corn and the Cost of Globalization,” “I Am Not a Stranger,” “Between Two Worlds,” and “Ties That Bind: The Stories Behind the Immigration Controversy.”

## **Mennonite Central Committee U.S. Washington Office**

110 Maryland Avenue NE, Suite 502

Washington, DC 20002

*Phone:* (202) 544-6564

*E-mail:* [mccwash@mcc.org](mailto:mccwash@mcc.org)

*Web:* [www.mcc.org/us/washington](http://www.mcc.org/us/washington)

Monitors U.S. public policy for its impact on MCC’s domestic and international relief, development and peace-making work. Hosts the MCC U.S. Coffee Project, inviting constituent churches to purchase and serve fairly traded coffee ([www.mcc.org/us/washington/coffee](http://www.mcc.org/us/washington/coffee)).

## **Oxfam International Advocacy Office**

1112 16th Street NW, Suite 600, Washington, DC 20036

*Phone:* (202) 496 1170

*E-mail:* [advocacy@oxfaminternational.org](mailto:advocacy@oxfaminternational.org)

*Web:* [www.oxfam.org](http://www.oxfam.org)

Hosts the Make Trade Fair campaign, calling on governments, institutions and multinational companies to change the rules so that trade can become part of the solution to poverty, not part of the problem.

## **Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy**

2105 1st Avenue South, Minneapolis, MN 55404

*Phone:* (612) 870-0453

*Web:* [www.iatp.org](http://www.iatp.org)

Promotes resilient family farms, rural communities and ecosystems around the world through research and education, science and technology, and advocacy.

## **U.S. Interfaith Trade Justice Campaign**

1225 Otis St., NE, Washington, DC 20017

*Phone:* 202-635-2757 x134

*Web:* [www.tradejusticeusa.org](http://www.tradejusticeusa.org)

Partners with church organizations to facilitate engagement of faith communities in educational activities, policy advocacy and fair trade efforts around global trade and investment policies.

## **National Network for Immigrant and Refugee Rights**

310 8th St., Suite 303, Oakland, CA 94607

*Phone:* 510-465-1984

*Web:* [www.nnirr.org](http://www.nnirr.org)

A coalition of local immigrant and refugee organizations. Offers popular education tools for community organizers, including Project BRIDGE, Building a Race and Immigration Dialogue in the Global Economy, and a video, “Uprooted: Refugees of the Global Economy,” in English with Spanish subtitles.

## **National Immigration Forum**

50 F Street NW, Suite 300, Washington, DC 2000

*Phone:* (202) 347-0040

*Web:* [www.immigrationforum.org](http://www.immigrationforum.org)

Convenes hundreds of national groups to advocate on a range of immigration policy issues, and equips local advocates and service providers across the country.

## **American Friends Service Committee Project Voice**

1501 Cherry Street, Philadelphia, PA 19102

*Phone:* (215) 241-7000

*Web:* [www.afsc.org/immigrants-rights/project-voice.htm](http://www.afsc.org/immigrants-rights/project-voice.htm)

Conducts local and national organizing and education campaigns to equip immigrant-led organizations in setting the national agenda for immigration policy and immigrants’ rights.

## **Borderlinks**

620 S Sixth Avenue, Tucson, AZ 85701

*Phone:* (520) 628-8263

*Web:* [www.borderlinks.org](http://www.borderlinks.org)

Conducts travel seminars in U.S./Mexico border communities, works with U.S. and Mexico partners to build peace on both sides of the border. A member of the No More Deaths Campaign ([www.nomoredeaths.org](http://www.nomoredeaths.org)), a coalition of faith communities and human rights organizations working to end border deaths.

## **Fair Trade Resource Network:**

PO Box 33772, Washington, DC 20033

*Phone:* (202) 234-6797

*Web:* [www.fairtraderesource.org](http://www.fairtraderesource.org)

Conducts research and offers resources about fair trade. Connects individuals and organizations seeking to get involved in fair trade advocacy.

## **Ten Thousand Villages:**

704 Main Street, PO Box 500, Akron, PA 17501

*Phone:* (717) 859-8100

*Web:* [www.tenthousandvillages.com](http://www.tenthousandvillages.com)

Provides fair income to people in developing countries by marketing their handicrafts and telling their stories in the United States and Canada.